# ingenium

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## WMSE Administration Speaks About Changes

*by Michael Trader*

Recently, WMSE administrators decided to shut the school's radio station nightly between midnight and six. This was done after three years of pressure on station manager Bob Betts, because of 'potential' security problems. It is the intent of this article to clear up some questions that many of the students, disc jockeys (DJs), and the general public have about these changes. Unfortunately, the justification to shut down the station remains somewhat unclear and it appears that it will stay that way. "We're not going to discuss that", stated Vice President J. Bryant VanCronkhite, Director of College Relations. "Those are security matters. It's for the protection of the students." Other topics discussed with Betts and VanCronkhite include reintegration of heavy metal back into the station's musical library and details on a "gimmick" pulled by a DJ with the help of VanCronkhite to show the public that the school and the radio station will not tolerate offensive lyrics.

When WMSE cut its hours earlier this year, many people felt that the move was abrupt and without concern for the DJs or the listening audience. According to the administration, this perception is not true. In fact, Vice President VanCronkhite states that "our actions are geared for their benefit. Whether they like it or not, we're gearing our actions based on what it's going to contribute to their future." These actions consisted of shutting down the station from 12 AM to 6 AM. From the onset of this change, the justification has been potential security problems. There have been several rumors concerning what these risks might be, but the administration will not verify any of them. When asked if using 'security risk' as justification for cutting the station's hours was a crutch for the admini-

*Photo by Michael Trader*

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stration to hide things from the DJs, VanCronkhite said it definitely was not. "In matters of security, there are places where you have to draw the limits... We just do not want [to be] broadcasting what security measures we've taken and what concerns we have for possible breakdowns in our security, that is universal, no organization would discuss security, you just don't."

**"In matters of security, there are places where you have to draw the limits..."**

Betts mentioned that these changes have been discussed for about three years with pressure on him to take action. "I fought against it and finally I decided that it was probably the way to go," said Betts. When asked if moving the station out of the Residence Halls was an attractive alternative to being off the air six hours a day, Betts replied, "No, I think we are fine here. ... I'd rather stick with what we have here." He stated that a move would not guarantee that the station would go back on 24 hours because WMSE would still be on the campus and the station would still be vulnerable to the 'security risk potential.' However, Betts does not see any further changes in the operation of the station or the administration's policy in the near future.

Heavy metal music programming was taken off of the air over a year ago because some of the songs contained lyrics that are 'egregiously offensive' and do not stand up to the schools moral values. The immediate solution to that 'offense risk' was to take all of the heavy metal records out of the record racks and lock them up in a storage area. The press went to war against the station and MSOE's administration defended its right to ban heavy metal music. The hype quieted down and many had hopes that the heavy metal ban would be re-evaluated. Well, some things have changed and some will never change. According to Betts, what has changed is that WMSE is now playing non-offensive, local, heavy metal, with the stress here on local bands. No nationally popular heavy metal bands are legitimately getting air play on WMSE. "That stuff is too dangerous." When VanCronkhite was asked how the administration feels about the return of heavy metal to WMSE he replied, "the heavy metal that is not satanic is appropriate in so far as the station manager wants to put it on the air." Betts was asked if the station would consider playing songs from these groups that had been reviewed by responsible DJs who desired to play some of the nationally recognized music. He bluntly stated, "We are not going to play [heavy metal] other than local metal groups." In addition, there will be no shows devoted to heavy metal. DJs who want to play local metal are free to use the music in their shows, "very few do," stated Betts.

**"We are not going to play [heavy metal] other than local metal groups."**

**"... next time you get on the air, break that record. We're not even going to have that kind of record in the station."**

However, these policy changes do not keep 'offensive' music from getting air play. Sometimes 'offensive' tracks are not labelled and a DJ will play the song unaware of the 'dirty lyrics'. When this is heard by the public, they often get upset and call the station and many times they also call VanCronkhite, who deals with public relations. "I'll defend a guy under these circumstances", states VanCronkhite, "but we can't put that kind of music on the air deliberately." A mistake similar to the situation described above occurred during the week of March 6. A DJ played a track from a compilation album titled "Whoops, Wrong Stereotype."

Six of the nine tracks on the album were already labelled no air. The DJ played one of the tracks that was without a "no air" label and was shocked to find that the song contained vulgar lyrics. The song was quickly taken off the air. However, later that hour, a second 'safe' song was played off of the same album and again contained offensive lyrics. The DJ received multiple phone calls and made a public apology. Several listeners were not satisfied and called VanCronkhite. VanCronkhite called the DJ to find out what was going on. The DJ was frustrated with the event and according to VanCronkhite, "The DJ said 'I don't know what else I can do.' I said 'I do, next time you get on the air, break that record.' We're not even going to have that kind of record in the station." Betts and VanCronkhite consider the breaking of a record to be a gimmick used to show the listeners that the DJ and the station were frustrated with the offensive lyrics and to show that those kind of songs will not be tolerated. VanCronkhite added that record breaking will not become a regular event and was apparently used to end an uncomfortable situation for the DJ.

To sum things up, the administration is trying to send out the message that offensive and vulgar lyrics will not be tolerated. Both VanCronkhite and Betts seem to realize that there is a difference in the perceptions of the administration and the perceptions of the students and DJs. They want to make it clear that their office doors are always open and no DJ should fear being fired for stating his opinion.•


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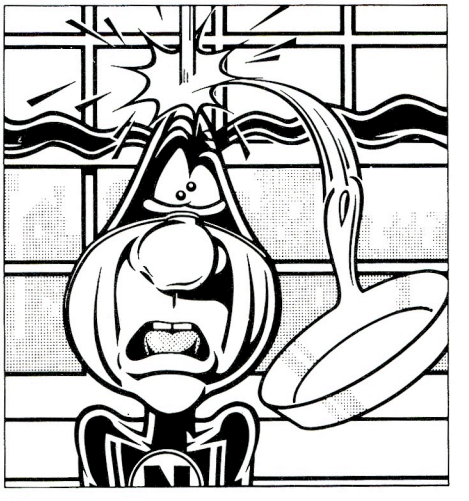

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